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THE LATE EMPRESS FREDERICK.

BY A PERSONAL FRIEND OF HER MAJESTY.

THE death of the Empress Frederick will be deeply regretted by those of the past generation who followed closely the stirring events which culminated in the unity of the German Empire, and the subsequent development of the great country in which Her Majesty, as wife of Frederick, Crown Prince of Germany, played so important a part. She enjoyed the enviable distinction of being both feared and disliked by Prince Bismarck; whilst the unseemly discussions and controversies around the death-bed of her illustrious husband gained her the sympathy of all upright, God-fearing men.

Victoria Adelaide Maria Louisa, Princess Royal of Great Britain and Ireland, eldest child of Victoria, Queen of England, was born at Windsor on the 21st of November, 1840.

Contemporary history contains but slight record of her early life. In the private life of the Queen, published anonymously in 1897, the following statement appears:

“Being sent to bed in the daytime was the chief punishment meted out to the Princesses; and the Princess Royal, who, as she grew in years, proved a very high-spirited child, spent many more hours than she can now count in the solitude of her own chamber. The Princess was in fact most difficult to manage.”

In Sir Rennell Rodd’s “Frederick, Crown Prince and Emperor,” appears the following:

“On the 29th of September, 1855, when the Royal party were riding unattended over the moors, a spray of the rare white heather, which the Prince dismounted to pluck and offer to his future bride, drew the secret from his lips; and the happy alliance was arranged, not by the manoeuvring of diplomacy or the scheming of politicians, but naturally, and as in the everyday world, by the spontaneous impulse of two young hearts toward each other. As the Prince himself expressed it: ‘It was not politics, it was not ambition; it was my heart.’”

On the nomination of the Prince, father of the bridegroom, to the Regency of Prussia, the date of the marriage was definitely settled for the 25th of January, 1858.

The wedding took place at the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace. An eye-witness describing the scene as the procession left the church wrote:

"The light of happiness in the eyes of the bride appealed to the most reserved among the spectators, and an audible 'God bless you!' passed from mouth to mouth along the line."

The wedding rings were made of pure Silesian gold, whilst the six bridesmaids, of England's noblest families, wore the emblematic white heather, in memory of the Prince's wooing.

The short honeymoon was spent at Windsor, and then in a heavy snowstorm the beloved Princess Royal of England turned her back on the happy land of her birth and went to meet the untried and the new, to dwell with strange faces, different ideas and ideals, unfamiliar associations. The young couple were received with enthusiasm throughout their journey to Berlin, where, shortly after their arrival, they took up their residence in the Palace on the Unter den Linden. There, on the 27th of January, 1859, the present Emperor was born.

History relates but few details of her early married life, beyond the fact that her surroundings were simple and artistic. These latter efforts were recognized by the Royal Academy of Arts in Berlin granting her a diploma as an honorary member in 1861. The Crown Princess was a very good artist. Those who can recall the Crimean war, the distress and sorrow caused thereby, the innumerable charities and bazaars that were started for the relief of the widows and orphans of the brave soldiers, will remember the charming water-color drawing, from the able brush of the Princess Royal, as she then was, of the tender wife bending over the body of her wounded husband, and tending him with so much care and solicitude. This picture was sold for the benefit of the Royal Patriotic Fund and brought a large sum, not only on account of its clever composition, but because it reflected the gentle nature, the sympathy for the afflicted, and the readiness to assist them, of the Royal girl of but fifteen summers. Her brilliant marriage, her exalted position in after years, in no way clouded that gentleness of heart, as was shown by the solicitude

she evinced for the stricken ones in the great German wars of 1864, 1866 and 1870, and, I may add, in the present Boer war.

Her Majesty was undoubtedly a gifted woman, and up to the day of her death she cultivated the friendship of those interested in art. She possessed a wonderful knowledge of Italian Art of the Renaissance, and was a devoted admirer of Italy, the Mother of Art. Her Castle at Friedrichshof was a museum in itself of precious works, pictures and statuary. As a linguist she was unequalled, and could carry on a conversation in four languages with consummate ease. On one occasion, when I had the honor of lunching with Her Majesty, she addressed me in Italian, saying: "You will correct my mistakes, but I do love speaking the dear language;" and she continued doing so throughout lunch.

She took a warm interest in the excavations in Crete, and kept up a long correspondence with one of their chief promoters, whilst her love of music was well known; and she ever remained a faithful friend to the Countess von Bülow, daughter of Minghetti, the well-known Italian statesman, a most gifted and distinguished pianist.

Sidney Whitman, in his life of the Emperor Frederick, describes the home life of the Princess as told by Gustav zu Putlitz, who held the office of Chamberlain to the Crown Princess, in letters to his wife:

"As I was passing through the drawing-room on the way to my room, I came upon the Crown Princess with Countess Hedwig Brühl, the former being engaged in searching for the text of a song of Goethe's which she partly knew from memory, while Hedwig played the air. They could not find the song in Goethe, and I did so for them. Then we had a most interesting conversation about literature. The Crown Princess is marvellously well-read; she has literally read everything, and knows everything more or less by heart. She showed us a print, which had just arrived, of a drawing she had executed for the benefit of the Crown Prince's fund. It consists of four pictures as a souvenir of the victory at Düppel—four soldiers, full length figures, representing four different branches of the service. The first, before the attack (morning); the second, waving the standard (noon); the third, wounded, listening to 'Now thank we all our God' (afternoon); the fourth, the victor, with helmet and laurel wreath, standing mourning at an open grave (evening). The last was finished, and was exceedingly powerful and natural, without any sentimentality. It is conceived with real genius and most artistically executed. This young Princess has more than average gifts, and, besides, is more cultured than any woman I know of her age. * * * * And then she has such charming manners, which put one perfectly at one's ease in spite of royal etiquette."

Again, on the 27th of June, 1864, he writes as follows:

"This morning I had just closed your letter when, at nine o'clock, the Crown Princess sent for me in the garden. A despatch from the Crown Prince gave her permission to remain, unless the naval captains think it likely that the Danes may land on the Island of Rügen. I telegraphed in all directions. Six Danish ships are in sight, but our naval officers think there is very little danger.

"Breakfast at ten; then a drive to the shooting box. The view from the tower gives a fine panorama of the island. A Danish ship was in sight, and also our gunboats cruising round the island. The Crown Princess ascended the tower. I do not know what she has not a passion for—music, art, literature, the army, the navy, riding and hunting. On leaving, she went down the mountain on foot, and I accompanied her through the rain-swept wood. She took the last number of the *Grenzboten* from her pocket, and gave it to me. It is astonishing that she not only reads, but commits everything to memory; and she discusses history like a historian, with excellent judgment and decision."

Up to 1864, the life of the Crown Princess had been an ideal one; she was happy in her home, contented with her lot in every sense, and she invariably accompanied her husband on his official visits. It must be recalled that, at the time of her marriage, King Frederick William the Fourth was on the throne of Prussia, although his brother was Regent; hence, she was immediately launched amongst all the differences which existed between her husband and the Ministers (Manteuffel and his colleagues). She was but a child, and should have been pardoned for the great love she bore to the home of her birth. No one sympathized with her in this strong feeling more than her loving husband, although it was never fully understood by public opinion in the land of her adoption. No cloud had crossed the horizon beyond the differences that existed between the Prince and Bismarck, and naturally the latter gave her credit for these. Dr. Moritz Busch relates that he took the liberty, in 1870, of asking Count Bismarck what sort of woman the Crown Princess was, and whether she had much influence over her husband. The Count said:

"I think not; and as to her intelligence, she is a clever woman; clever in a womanly way. She is not able to disguise her feelings, or at least not always. I have cost her many tears, and she could not conceal how angry she was with me after the annexations" (that is to say, of Schleswig and Hanover). "She could hardly bear the sight of me, but that feeling has now somewhat subsided. She once asked me to bring her a glass of water, and, as I handed it to her, she said to a lady-in-waiting who sat near, and whose name I forget; 'He has cost me as many tears as there is water in this glass.' But that is all over now."

The Danish war and the subsequent annexation of Schleswig was her first sorrow, and naturally so, as her beloved husband left her to fight against Denmark, the home of the Princess of Wales, her favorite brother's consort.

During the anxious time preceding the Austrian campaign a second daughter was born, and received the name of Victoria.

It is well known that the Crown Prince was entirely opposed to Bismarck's policy at this time; and in this he was fully supported by the Crown Princess, and very possibly influenced, as, at one period of the negotiations, the mediation of Queen Victoria was suggested but refused by Bismarck.

On the departure of the Crown Prince for the war, his illustrious Consort was in sad trouble, as her youngest son, Sigismund—born September 15th, 1864—fell seriously ill, and eventually died. But Her Royal Highness, setting aside her domestic grief, devoted all her energies to good works in the interests of the sick and wounded, fitting up a number of rooms in her palace at Berlin for the reception of wounded officers.

The Crown Princess accompanied her husband when he went to Paris as President of the Prussian Committee at the French International Exhibition of 1867, entering into all the gaieties of the Imperial Court. It was in Paris that she met Ernest Renan, the author of the "*Vie de Jésus*," who spoke of her afterward as a "very remarkable woman."

On the occasion of the marriage of the late King Humbert of Italy, in 1868, and at the subsequent ceremony of the opening of the Suez Canal, the Crown Princess did not accompany her husband, partly because she was in delicate health, and partly because of the illness of Prince Waldemar. He was always a weakly child, and only lived to the age of eleven, dying on the 27th of March, 1879. Those of my readers who have visited the Emperor Frederick's Mausoleum at Potsdam will recollect the little side chapel, in which rest the remains of Prince Waldemar and his brother Sigismund.

On the outbreak of the Franco-German war, a third daughter, who received the name of Sophie, was born to the royal couple. As soon as the health of the Crown Princess was sufficiently restored, she by her energy and devotion to duty set an example of self-sacrifice in the interests of the sick and wounded, which was the admiration of all with whom she was thrown in contact.

It is stated that, in her letters to her husband, she discussed political questions, and there is no doubt that Prince Bismarck was of opinion that the Crown Princess influenced her husband against the bombardment of Paris, which, much against Prince Bismarck's advice, was at the Crown Prince's instigation so often postponed. Public opinion in Berlin was very wroth against her for this alleged interference.

In April, 1873, on the occasion of a visit to the Imperial Court at Vienna, Her Royal Highness made the acquaintance of the portrait painter, Heinrich von Angeli, who describes her as a lady endowed with every adornment of heart and mind. During the next few years, perhaps the happiest of her life, nothing of special moment took place. They were spent in a homely manner, in the education of her children, the development of technical training, the industrial training of women, and many other similar undertakings. State visits, happy holiday trips were paid to Venice and England. On February 18th, 1878, Princess Charlotte, the eldest daughter, was married to the Hereditary Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Meiningen, a union which promised to be a happy one in every way; and this was followed by the betrothal, in 1880, of Prince William (the present Emperor) to the Princess Augusta Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein, an alliance which met with the heartiest approval of both parents, as it was one of mutual and deep-seated affection.

The anxiety of the Crown Princess as to the health of her illustrious husband was first aroused in the autumn of 1886, when, after returning from a drive on the Riviera, he contracted a severe cold, from which his throat never recovered. As the hoarseness increased, so did the apprehensions of the Princess. The ablest German specialists were called in, and it was only natural that Professor Bergmann, before finally deciding to operate, should beg the Princess to obtain the opinion of yet another specialist on diseases of throat. It was then decided that the distinguished English surgeon, Sir Morell Mackenzie, should be called in; his report, supported by the opinion of Professor Virchow, set aside the idea that an immediate operation was necessary, and Mackenzie assumed the further treatment of the case.

The Crown Princess's devotion to her dying husband during these sad days is too well known to need recapitulation. The sceptre of power was almost within her reach; her father-in-law,

the reigning Emperor, had already attained the great age of ninety-one, and it was but natural that her ambition hoped to see her loved one on the throne as Emperor.

On March 9th, 1888, the first German Emperor passed peacefully away; and on the following day the Crown Princess, now Empress, accompanied her husband to Berlin, leaving San Remo and its lovely climate with tears of regret. The controversies between the German and English surgeons, far from abating, increased a hundredfold on the accession of the Emperor Frederick to the throne. His brief reign of ninety-three days was embittered by the discussions which took place over the projected marriage of Prince Alexander of Battenberg, Prince of Bulgaria, to Princess Victoria, second daughter of the Empress Frederick. It was strongly objected to on political grounds by Prince Bismarck, but supported on those of mutual love and admiration by the Empress.

The following appears in Busch's life of Bismarck, and is interesting as showing the real feeling of the Germans toward the Empress Frederick:

"April 28th, 1888.

"This afternoon met Bucher in the Königin Augusta Strasse. * * *
* * * He said smilingly: 'I have just heard a surprising piece of news. Grandmamma behaved quite sensibly at Charlottenburg. She declared the attitude of Prince Bismarck in the Battenberg marriage scheme to be quite correct, and urged her daughter to change her ways. Of course it was very nice of her not to forget her own country and to wish to benefit it where it was possible for her to do so, but she needed the attachment of the Germans, and should endeavor to secure it; and finally she brought about a reconciliation between Prince William (the present Emperor) and his mother.' I asked: 'Have you that on good authority?' 'On very good authority,' he replied. 'Well,' I said, 'that is highly satisfactory, and we shall act accordingly in the immediate future; for of course we do not hate Victoria II. on account of her extraction, but because she feels as an Englishwoman and wishes to promote English interests at our expense, and because she despises us Germans. The question is whether in the long run she will heed this maternal admonition.'"

Prince Bismarck thus describes his relations with the Empress Frederick at this time:

"I was always on the best of terms with the Emperor Frederick and his Consort, the Empress Victoria. Any differences of opinion between us were discussed with their Majesties in the most friendly way. The Empress Victoria is, moreover, very clever and decided. When I appeared with some business for her Imperial Consort, she

frequently entered the sick room before me to prepare him and gain him over for my project."

The Empress Frederick became a widow on the 15th of June, 1888. Her first written message is recorded as follows:

"She who was so proud and happy to be the wife of your only son mourns with you, poor Mother. No mother ever had such a son. Be strong and proud in your grief. Even this morning he sent you a greeting.
Victoria."

During her widowhood, the Empress lived a very retired life, devoting herself to good works and charitable enterprises.

There was at one time an undoubted tension between Her Majesty and her son, the Emperor William, but that passed long since, and the hatchet was buried in the waters of Lethe. Within sight of the picturesque old Castle of Kronberg, at the foot of the Taunus range of mountains, and overlooking the valley of the Main, the Empress Frederick reigned supreme in the Castle of Friedrichshof, built after her own heart, and filled with treasures collected in her happy travels through Italy. Here, in her latter days, was to be found a society composed of distinguished professors in art, music and literature, officers from the neighboring garrison of Frankfort, an English ex-Cabinet Minister or two from Homburg, occasionally some lovely American who had married into one of Germany's noble families; and here, assisted by her graceful favorite daughter, Princess Margaret of Hesse, would the Empress dispense her hospitality with a simplicity and absence of pomp which put all her guests at their ease.

Her ladies and gentlemen in waiting were devoted to her. One of the latter fought a duel when once her good name was assailed, and suffered the penalty of the law for so doing with imprisonment in a fortress. A staunch Protestant through life, she was no bigot, and she respected the opinions of those who differed with her in matters of conscience. I recollect Her Majesty assisting at the opening of the new Roman Catholic Church at Homburg v. d. Höhe in 1895, and afterward, in course of conversation, strongly supporting the claims of the Little Sisters at their educational convent, simply on account of the bright example they set and the admirable system of teaching they had established.

Another interesting episode occurs to me of a visit which I paid Her Majesty on a bright Sunday afternoon in January,

1900, at the small, unpretentious Villa Pearse, beautifully situated on the Gulf of Lerici, adjoining that of Spezia. The Italian Naval Commander-in-Chief took me out in his steam pinnace from the dockyard of the famous Italian fortress. He told me she was very ill, and I must be prepared to see a great change. I sent up my card to Baron Seckendorf, who kindly received me and said: "Her Majesty is finishing a sketch in the garden, but will be pleased to receive you in half an hour." On my return, I met her walking down the garden, evidently in pain; but she greeted me with the same sweet, sad smile, never to be forgotten by those who knew her, and in the same soft, musical voice which was one of her greatest charms. When we were seated in the drawing room, she said: "Have you brought me good news? Are not these reverses in Africa awful? Has Lord Roberts arrived? What do you think will happen?" and a thousand and one similar questions. After I had replied, she said: "I am working hard all day and every day at Tam o' Shanters, comforters and socks for the poor soldiers; it is the only solace I have in these sad times, and it is the only way in which I can show my sympathy. As an Englishwoman, I could not return to Germany at the present moment; the sympathy of the public is misdirected by the press, which is misinformed; but, thank God, the sympathies of my son, the Emperor, are entirely with England, and it is to the interest of Germany that they should be so." Ah, yes! How well I knew that being of English birth was the only reproach her enemies could bring against her. From the day of her marriage, she had striven to do her duty to her adopted country, but she refused to give up the great privilege of her birthright, and endeavored to teach the advantages that she had learnt in England, and which were invariably misunderstood.

The Empress Frederick was not a beauty in the strict sense of the word; but her gracious smile, sad as it was in her latter days, always appealed to the hardest of hearts. She was of average height, with a marked presence and graceful, rounded figure. In character she resembled her mother, but she was wanting in that full measure of tact which so characterized Queen Victoria through her long life and reign. As a horsewoman she was unequalled, and up to and even within the last three years she enjoyed riding. One of her suite in talking to me one day,

attributed her fatal illness to a fall she had when riding one morning in the forest round Kronberg.

The Empress Frederick was a loving daughter, a faithful wife, a devoted mother. Her character was misunderstood in the land of her adoption, which was not ripe for the advent of such a pioneer of liberal thought; she went there fifty years too soon. Her great influence, her unbounded energy, were devoted to the cause of freedom and justice, to the emancipation of women, the protection of the weak, the development of all that is most noble in man's nature, to the cultivation of art, to the relief of the sick and the support of those in trouble. She was fearless in speech, courageous in her convictions, confident in her strength. She, alas, had many enemies, jealous of her great influence, envious of her universal knowledge; but, on the other hand, she had devoted friends, who will always cherish the recollection of her great qualities, her loving nature, and her brilliant example of uprightness. A distinguished Royal physician is reported to have said that there were three races of mankind—a Royal race, a white race, and a black race.

When the history of the Empress Frederick's life is written in years to come—not in the fierce light of popular prejudice still subsisting in Germany as illustrated by Bismarck, who, to a great extent, encouraged this feeling when he invariably alluded to her as "the Englishwoman, the Guelph"—she will be handed down to posterity as one of the most remarkable women of the Royal race—a daughter of a great Queen, the Mother of a powerful Emperor.